



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: September 12th, 2023

22

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

COMBATTING THE CHILDCARE CRISIS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

The County of San Diego is facing a dire childcare crisis. Not only have services become unaffordable for the average family, but there is a lack of available care providers. It is estimated that 77% of parents struggle to find caregivers for their children. Many licensed childcare centers have incredibly long waitlists, and several areas within the region are considered childcare deserts.

Lack of access to childcare has a direct impact on the workforce, particularly for lower income workers, working parents, single parents, and women— especially women of color, making it difficult to balance work and family needs.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue even further. One in eight childcare settings closed after March of 2020, many never reopening their doors. This impacted many of the already vulnerable neighborhoods where access to childcare was already a persistent disparity. Significant and coordinated investments are needed to support the workforce, families, and grow the local childcare industry. It is imperative that the County of San Diego (County) strengthen resources and infrastructure needed to make meaningful changes within the childcare system, supporting accessible childcare options for families.

In June 2023, the Child Care Blueprint was provided to the Board of Supervisors, focusing on three priority areas. The Blueprint is grounded in the following vision: San Diego County is a place where every family has access to childcare that meets their geographic, scheduling, cultural, language, and economic needs; the childcare provider workforce is highly valued and financially thriving; and all types of childcare settings support children's healthy development. The three priority areas in the Blueprint are:

1. The childcare workforce is well-trained, supported, valued as a profession, and paid competitive wages.

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2. Safe and quality facilities are developed and renovated to expand childcare programs, particularly in geographic areas where childcare is scarce, or family demand outpaces supply.
3. All families have access to childcare that meets their needs and preferences and supports their children's learning, physical and mental health, and social-emotional development.

Today's action requests that the CAO create a pilot program utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to provide streamlined resources and infrastructure needed to provide childcare services locally. The pilot would aim to focus on licensing and facility needs and providing resources to enhance infrastructure for new and existing childcare providers within identified childcare deserts. Additionally, we request that the CAO implement a pilot program for emergency childcare days, by which employees will be able to take paid time off to tend to important familial needs, allowing for a better work-life balance.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

VICE CHAIR LAWSON-REMER AND CHAIRWOMAN VARGAS

1. Direct CAO to create a pilot program and issue a competitive procurement utilizing \$500,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to provide streamlined resources and infrastructure for childcare services locally. The pilot would focus on licensing, and providing resources to enhance infrastructure needs particularly for new and existing childcare providers and family childcare homes within identified childcare deserts. This pilot shall consider any necessary wages and benefits for childcare workers with accordance to the County's negotiation processes and look for potential ways to uplift training and workforce development.
2. Direct CAO to meet and confer with the County unions/associations and create a pilot program that would implement an emergency childcare flex day system for County employees, utilizing an estimated \$500,000 in ARPA dollars, with the intent of providing up to three (3) paid days off for employees to use for emergency childcare purposes.
3. Revise the ARPA Framework to use a portion of the \$2,000,000 Child Care Facility Development and Improvement element of the Framework to fund recommendations 1 and 2.
4. Transfer appropriations of \$500,000 from Finance Other, Other Charges, to the Health and Human Services Agency, Services and Supplies, to fund the pilot program to provide streamlined resources and infrastructure for childcare services locally (recommendation 1), based on ARPA funds described in recommendation 3.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

San Diego County is facing a massive childcare crisis. Many families live in childcare deserts without access to providers, creating a complex equity issue. This item will help to streamline resources and enhance local infrastructure so that providers in childcare deserts are able to provide services more easily to their respective communities. In addition, this item will help to move forward emergency childcare flex days at the County of San Diego, providing employees with

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some additional flexibility in their work schedule so that they can prioritize both their family and work priorities.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed action to provide and streamline resources for childcare providers might help to reduce overall greenhouse gases in San Diego County by reducing a family's need to drive as far to access viable childcare providers. Emergency childcare flex days may also have similar impacts as individuals could choose to work from home or setting that is closer to where their family member is being cared for.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Operational Plan in Finance Other. If approved, this request will result in costs and revenue of \$500,000 in the Health and Human Services Agency to provide streamlined resources and infrastructure for childcare services locally and an estimated \$500,000 in Finance Other for an emergency childcare flex day pilot for County employees. Actual costs of the County employee emergency childcare pilot program noted in recommendation 2 will depend on certain unknown factors such as level of usage. The funding source for this request is American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding allocated directly to the County. As part of the ARPA Framework, \$1,000,000 will be redirected from funds originally allocated for consideration of a childcare facility. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed actions will support the local workforce and businesses in San Diego County through advancing much needed childcare resources and infrastructure. Additionally, providing emergency childcare flex days at the County of San Diego may help worker's familial obligations to be better met and in turn foster better engagement and productivity. Thus, benefitting the County enterprise and the local economy through better employee retention.

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The County of San Diego is facing a dire childcare crisis. Not only have services become unaffordable for the average family, but there is a lack of available care providers. It is estimated that 77% of parents struggle to find caregivers for their children. Many licensed childcare centers have incredibly long waitlists, and several areas within the region are considered childcare deserts. Lack of access to childcare has a direct impact on the workforce, particularly for lower income workers, working parents, single parents, and women— especially women of color, making it difficult to balance work and family needs. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue even further. One in eight childcare settings closed after March of 2020, many never reopening their doors. This hit many of the already vulnerable neighborhoods where access to childcare was already a persistent disparity. Significant and coordinated investments are needed to support the workforce, families, and grow the local childcare industry.

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1. The childcare workforce is well-trained, supported, valued as a profession, and paid competitive wages.
2. Safe and quality facilities are developed and renovated to expand childcare programs, particularly in geographic areas where childcare is scarce, or family demand outpaces supply.
3. All families have access to childcare that meets their needs and preferences and supports their children's learning, physical and mental health, and social-emotional development.

The County has already undertaken several initiatives in support of the Blueprint. On June 08, 2021 (3), the County dedicated \$10 million dollars to childcare workforce investments. The primary focus of this program is to focus on critical supports for new and existing early care and education. This includes creating access to tuition supports, professional development, and a targeted focus on family childcare providers that were significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and struggled to sustain their business. There will be job training for existing and new early educators joining the workforce, funding to pay for continuing education in early care and additional education for those that seek to become better educated on trauma informed practices for working with diverse needs. Retention stipends providing additional financial support to childcare providers who are not eligible for supplemental rates paid by California Department of Social Services are also included as part of this program. Outcome measures will be utilized in alignment with the San Diego Quality Preschool Initiative as this program is carried out to monitor its success and ensure actions are in alignment with the local Childcare Plan.

In addition, some of these funds are going toward a cost estimation model (CEM) which will be utilized to show the current costs of operating a childcare, within varying levels of quality. The CEM will help the County to better understand the cost to implement different types of childcare options that account for various factors that include but are not limited to the staffing ratios, size of the group, age of the children, number of days and hours of operation, professional development, and licensing standards. The contractor, P-5 Strategies, is carrying out this work and we anticipate a report by the end of the 2023 calendar year.

On June 08, 2021 (3), \$2 million was dedicated to the Childcare Shared Services Alliance. This program is modeled after nationally recognized processes for early care and education. This framework is designed to support linkages and build childcare capacity, help maximize enrollment, collect tuition fees in full and on time, manage expenses and strengthen family and community engagement for childcare providers. Family childcare providers will be prioritized based on the Healthy Places Index (HPI), identifying communities that have been disproportionately impacted. The establishment of this program aims to help to connect providers within the community to build

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leadership, become financially sound, efficient, and better able to offer affordable, high-quality services for children and families.

On June 8, 2021 (3), \$2 million of the ARPA Framework was allocated to Child Care Facility Development and Improvement, to explore the ability to develop a childcare facility. Studies were done on the feasibility of locating a childcare facility at a County property, and ultimately the County Operations Center (COC) was identified as the location to provide adequate and required features of a childcare facility. Since this time, other uses have been identified for the COC which would preclude the construction of an on-site childcare facility. These uses include consolidation of additional services at the COC, which will provide a streamlined location for residents who have County business to conduct, while also freeing up County properties for other uses. Since this time, the element of the ARPA Framework has been reviewed for other childcare program and infrastructure needs and is available to be reallocated to support today's actions. If approved, today's actions will support two pilot programs to combat the childcare crisis. The first pilot program is to provide streamlined resources and infrastructure for childcare services locally which is intended to focus on licensing, permit, and facility needs. Providing resources to enhance infrastructure needs for new and existing childcare providers within childcare deserts. The second pilot program is to implement a program providing paid time off for emergency childcare needs of County employees.

While the County is working diligently towards several solutions, the additional steps requested today will help to further enhance these services and programs for the betterment of our workforce and communities.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

These actions support the County of San Diego's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan Sustainability, Empower, Equity, and Community initiatives by investing in the local workforce through family services that will enhance well-being, resiliency, and quality of life across the San Diego region.

Respectfully submitted,



NORA VARGAS
Chairwoman, 1st District



TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Vice Chair, 3rd District

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A